Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Annual Report

November 2005

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

Hon. Murray Scott
Speaker
House of Assembly
Province House
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I am pleased to submit the 2004 / 2005 Report of the committee for the First Session of the Fifty-Ninth General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

Gerald E. Sampson

Mr. Gerald Sampson, MLA
(Victoria-The Lakes)
Chairman
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Halifax, Nova Scotia
2005

Printed on paper that contains recycled fibre

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Foreword

Although there is no written mandate for the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, the report was written with the understanding that the Committee be established for the purpose of considering matters pertaining to the Royal Canadian Legion and Veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces.

The report is written under individual topics outlining the concerns and issues brought forth from each group / organization.

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

October 21, 2004

WITNESSES

There were no witnesses present during this meeting. The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs had, at this juncture, entertained public requests to meet with the committee. The Committee received a written request from the Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command.

In addition, the Standing Committee had also invited representatives from the Canadian Youth Remembrance Society, the Nova Scotia Office for the Year of the Veteran, and Veterans Affairs Canada to meet with them to discuss issues and concerns that were brought forth by the Royal Canadian Legion.

References to, and within, this transcript can be found on the Nova Scotia Government Web Site at: http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard//comm/va/va_2004oct21.htm

CANADIAN YOUTH REMEMBRANCE SOCIETY

November 25, 2004

WITNESSES

Canadian Youth Remembrance Society
Mr. Patrick Milner – Chairman
Mr. Joe Henschel – Board Member

INTRODUCTION

The Society began about two years ago mainly due to the perceived need for a group that was driven by young Canadians; the leadership, the vision and the organization of which was to be independent and had to have the ability to be autonomous, to seek out advice, and to engage other young people in a cause to never forget.

The board of directors incorporated a society on October 27, 2003 under the Societies Act and had their official launch on November 5, 2004 with the gracious support of Her Honour, Myra A. Freeman, Lieutenant Governor. In that same year, the Society was presented for the first time with their official wreath from the Royal Canadian Legion.

Objective

The Canadian Youth Remembrance Society was established under the premise with the goal of engaging and educating all young Canadians about the contribution and sacrifices of veterans and all those who have come before. Their current mission is to create a national culture of remembrance where youth educate youth about these contributions.

The board believes that to truly evaluate or understand a nation or a province, community, an organization or even a family, you need to first look to its youth and this is the premise, which they feel has the greatest potential. Canada's youth have an incredible opportunity to set an example for the rest of the world.

Recommendations

The Society wanted to meet with the Committee first, to make them aware of the Society's existence.

Secondly, the Canadian Youth Remembrance Society would like to involve the entire province in their efforts and hoped to receive a letter of support or a plaque from the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs hat could be put with the Society's proposal to Veterans Affairs Canada.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Although there were a number of issues discussed throughout the meeting, outlined below are a few of the key issues.

— Canadian History in High Schools. Implemented partly through the initiatives of this Committee is that in Nova Scotia Canadian history is now mandatory in high schools. That means that the students of today are learning about the past and the sacrifices of Canadian veterans.

— Goals of the Society. To develop a board; to educate the board and to help strengthen its leadership and governance. To engage young people in discussion and to find a person to become an executive director or a coordinator to harness the vision of the board, Nova Scotia youth and eventually Canada's youth.

— Society's Membership. Currently there are 11 members and beginning with the next fiscal year the Society will be putting a priority on getting additional members.

— Funding. One of the obvious starting points is Veterans Affairs Canada. The department is very supportive of the society; however, they are waiting for the Society to provide put forward a proposal prior to providing access to funding. Provincially there is not a real fit in terms of a department and it is a struggle figuring out whom to approach and how to access any potential funding.

MOTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the discussion, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs unanimously agreed to pass the following motions:

> "The Veterans Affairs Committee for the Province of Nova Scotia support the efforts of the Canadian Youth Remembrance Society and write a letter and a certificate, supporting their organizational and their efforts".

During committee business, the Standing Committee had some concern regarding the Veterans Independence Program (VIP) cut off date of September 1990 for surviving spouses of veterans. Amendments were made by the federal government to continue the benefits of this program for the life of the spouse if the veteran passed away in or after September 1990. The Committee questioned the justification for September 1990 being the cut off date for this benefit. Following this the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs had unanimously passed the following motion:

> " To inquire of the federal government to alter this date to better ensures that all widows who should qualify for VIP do fall under this program."

DOCUMENTATION

There was no documentation requested by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs at this meeting.

References to, and within, this transcript can be found on the Nova Scotia Government Web Site at: http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard//comm/va/va_2004nov25.htm

VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA - ATLANTIC REGION

January 20, 2005

WITNESSES

Veterans Affairs Canada - Atlantic Region
Mr. John Walker – Acting Regional Director General
Mr. Barry Gallant – Associate Regional Director General
Mr. Paul Brown – District Director, Halifax
Ms. Susan Whitehouse – Acting Regional Director of Client Services

INTRODUCTION

Veterans Affairs Canada' s (VAC) mission is to provide high quality client-centred services and benefits that respond to the needs of veteran clients and others including Canadian Armed Forces and RCMP as well as their families. This is in recognition of their services to Canada and also to keep the memory of their achievements and sacrifices alive for all Canadians.

Initiatives that the department is undertaking this year is first and foremost the Year of the Veteran, which is a year-long celebration across the country dedicated to Canada's veterans, and secondly the Service and Program Modernization Task Force.

Clients

Veterans Affairs Canada has two different groups of clients, the World War II/Korea veteran cadre and the Canada Forces veterans. To try to have one suite of benefits, which would encompass all of their needs, is not beneficial to either group as their needs are too different.

The current veteran population in Canada, the clients of Veterans Affairs, is just over 209,000. In Atlantic Canada there are 33,868 or 16.2 per cent of the total. Nova Scotia has the largest share of veteran clients in Atlantic Canada with 15,400. War service veterans still represent the largest group, but the survivor group is the fastest growing one. Canadian Forces is at 26 per cent and growing and the RCMP client base is at 309.

Despite World War II and the Korean Conflict having ended quite some time ago, Veterans Affairs Canada still has over 200,000 clients across the country and expenditures of over $2.3 billion, which is the tenth largest expenditure of a federal government department.

Veterans Independence Program (VIP)

Within the past year changes have been made to the Veterans Independence Program with respect to benefits for veterans' caregivers. Surviving spouses or caregivers of veterans who had been receiving housekeeping and groundskeeping benefits at the time of death, since 1981, became eligible to continue these benefits for their lifetime. In addition Veterans Affairs Canada changed the term "spouse" in legislation to "primary caregivers", which encompasses common law partners, adult children, siblings or others who may qualify as being the primary caregiver for the veteran at the time of his death.

Last Post Fund

The Last Post Fund, an independent body apart from Veterans Affairs, administers veterans' grave markers. It receives some funding from VAC and some public donations. Currently there are no outstanding applications from prior years and there are only 10 placements pending.

Service and Program Modernization Task Force

A Service and Program Modernization Task Force was established in September 2003 with the goal to re-establish and redesign a comprehensive approach to the re-establishment of CF veterans in civilian life. The "Modern Day Veterans Charter" was announced in May 2004. Some changes to make benefits better fit the need include:

- Instead of a disability pension, there is going to be a disability award which will be a lump sum award provided to the recipients in amounts dependent upon their disability.
- A rehab program, comprehensive services to veterans incorporating their medical and vocational rehabilitation to address tier disabilities and to bring them to a point where they can overcome their disabilities and be ready to reintegrate into the workforce.
- The earnings loss and income support is for temporary loss of earnings assistance to veterans undergoing the rehab program who do not have an income and while they are undergoing rehab to reintegrate them back into the workforce. If the disability is such that their rehabilitation is not a possibility, they will be provided with a loss of income until they turn 65 and then they would qualify for other available federal programs.
- The health services that the veterans will have will be similar to the one that is available for the Public Service, which will include families.
- The final benefit is job placement. VAC will initiate such services, which would help the CF veteran find employment.

Year of the Veteran

The Year of the Veteran is a year-long tribute to honour veterans of the wars of the last century and Canadian forces who served at home and abroad in the service of peace. It is also to mark the 60th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

The key events in Atlantic Canada: the Battle of the Atlantic, The Liberation of Holland, VE Day ceremonies and activities, Beaumont-Hamel Commemoration, Black Battalion.

Veterans Affairs Canada is encouraging provincial and municipal government to proclaim the Year of the Veteran. In Halifax VAC have formed a working group to plan and organize activities and events, which they hope will provide a model for communities across Nova Scotia.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Although there were a number of issues discussed throughout the meeting, outlined below are a few of the key issues.

— Disability Pensions – Disability Awards. Financial counsel will be available to ensure that the lump sum is managed properly and used only for the disability.

— VIP. Groundskeeping is a major benefit of the VIP program; it covers lawn mowing, raking, snow shoveling, plowing, etc. VIP is meant to enable people to stay at home longer, rather than going into a long-term care facility. Nationally in 2004, VAC spent $27.5 million and just over $6 million in Nova Scotia.

— Last Post Fund. There was a backlog of last post fund services; however about 30 or more headstones were covered throughout the summer with about 10 pending. VAC spent $1.6 million in this area in Nova Scotia alone.

— Funding for Youth Programs. There is additional funding targeted for youth, and there are several initiatives underway which will engage the schools even more than in the past. VAC is looking at a program where they could provide a medal to each of the schools across the country in a contest where students would do research on a particular veteran and make presentation to a national organization.

— VAC Policy with regard to Legions. VAC works very closely with the Royal Canadian Legion on a number of issues; however, the VAC does not have a policy that would give them the ability to award funding to any of the 1,600 individual branches across the country. VAC, in the past, provided to Dominion Command an annual grant in the magnitude of $30,000 to $40,000, but the Legion chose not to accept that grant. VAC does not have a policy that would see them having the ability to accord funding to any of the 1,600 individual branches across the country.

— VIP – Home Modifications. These are for modifications to the interior of the home to enhance accessibility. In 2004, VAC spent $362,000 on home modifications in Atlantic Canada. For low-income veterans, there is $500 a year of what is called an 'assistance fund', which is available on an emergency basis.

MOTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

There were no motions or recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs at this time.

DOCUMENTATIONS

There was no documentation requested by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs at this time.

References to, and within, this transcript can be found on the Nova Scotia Government Web Site at: http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard//comm/va/va_2005jan20.htm

Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command

March 3, 2005

WITNESSES

Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command
Mr. Victor Barnes - Command President
Mr. Jack Hatcher - Honorary Treasurer
Mr. Frank Fudge – Provincial Secretary

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command met with the Standing Committee to raise the concerns of the aging population in Nova Scotia and in particular the concerns of the provinces veterans, seniors and their families. Three areas of concern and focus include the needs of caregivers; the ongoing need for housing options, particularly for those in rural areas; and the need for improved palliative care services.

The Needs of Caregivers

The majority of older persons in Canada requiring care are, supported by their spouses, their daughters or their daughters-in-law. These people save the government countless dollars through their expertise and commitment. However, what these caregivers need in order to continue providing services are:

- Training – family caregivers need information and training about administering medications and mobilizing assistive devices and community resources,
- Support Groups – this option allows those who are feeling overwhelmed by the responsibilities of caregiving to meet with others to share stories and strategies and provide one another with support,
- Day Care Options – this option exists to a limited extent, however, funding is still not available through a provincial program that ensures sustainability,
- Respite Care – respite care is a requirement rather than a luxury. The stress of caring for a family member can result in a crisis. The health of the caregiver is compromised and the person they are caring for can end up being institutionalized. This crisis can often be averted by providing the caregiver with time away from their duties of caregiving. The Home Care Program offers a limited respite although an increase in the number of respite hours provided each week and an option of an occasional weekend or a week-long break is a requirement for persons who have taken on this caring role.

- Access to Equipment – many older persons need specialized equipment in order to be cared for at home. While some required items might be available on loan, the number of programs loaning the equipment is decreasing due to liability issues.

The Need for Housing Options

Oftentimes women outlive men and are left with family homes that they are unable to maintain which can lead older women to look for housing alternatives. Unfortunately, accessible, affordable housing is in limited supply in rural Nova Scotia and this means that older people, rural women in particular, must leave their home communities in search of appropriate housing. It is widely recognized that social networks are an essential component of successful aging.

The Royal Canadian Legion has taken this concern seriously and is actively pursuing the development of a housing complex in Beaver Bank that will support persons as they age. The Legion invites the Province of Nova Scotia to acknowledge this as a growing need and respond by developing more subsidized housing units that will support older Nova Scotians in aging as close to their home community as possible.

Palliative Care Options

Supporting people to die in comfort is recognized as an important component of health care in Nova Scotia. In spite of this, there are still health districts that do not have formal palliative care services. The Annapolis Valley district in Nova Scotia currently has a part-time palliative care nurse and a physician who consults on palliative cases which is inadequate for a rural district with 80,000 residents.

A small group in the district has pursued the option of building a free standing hospice and have committed to building the hospice if the government will provide 90 per cent of the funding required to operate the facility. The Royal Canadian Legion of Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command supports this initiative and is urging the provincial government to take this on as a pilot project to allow this initiative to establish a model that can provide a template for delivery of palliative care in other rural areas.

The National Track and Field Championships

The National Track and Field Championships will be held in Edmonton, Alberta August 2005. With the full support of Dominion Command and Athletics Canada, the event has proven to be a stepping-stone for young athletes to Canada, Commonwealth, World and Olympic Games. This year the Legion hopes to send 38 athletes, four chaperones and three coaches to this event at a cost of $63,500. In addition to this, the athletes must pay for their uniforms and necessities at an approximate cost of another $11,250.

Since the games in August 2004, there is hardly a week that goes by without media reports indicating Nova Scotia track and field athletes excelling in breaking both provincial and national records, with most of these athletes having attended the Legion National Track and Field competitions.

Over the past year the Legion has gone out to businesses and the provincial government requesting assistance to offset the escalating costs with no favourable response. The Legion is again, asking for suggestions and support in finding some type of financial aid so they may continue to send these young, Nova Scotia ambassadors to the Legion National Track and Field competitions.

Furthermore, although Nova Scotia has two fields for track and field that will meet Olympic standards, the necessary facilities and accommodations are lacking. To host the National Track and Field Championships, Nova Scotia must have its own facility.

The Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada (SOCAN)

Since 1997 there have been discussions between the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command and representatives of SOCAN about legion payments to the society. SOCAN's stand has been that legions take in profits from their bars and therefore should be placed in the same category as bars and restaurants across the province. On the other hand, the legions contend that they are not-for-profit organizations providing numerous services to their communities and should be eligible for licensing under Tariff No. 21which covers agriculture societies or similar community organizations that are non-profit. The Legion requested the assistance of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to encourage SOCAN to recognize the Royal Canadian Legions as a not-for-profit organization and understand that they give their money back to the community to support veterans and the community itself.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Although there were a number of issues discussed throughout the meeting, outlined below are a few of the key issues.

— Hospice Funding. There is a committee, in the Annapolis Valley district that is trying to elicit funds to build a hospice that will house 10 persons who would have their own rooms with a kitchen, and other amenities. The total cost is about $5 million, which is going to be supplied by the community. The government is being asked to commit to paying 90 per cent of the operating costs.

—Seniors Complex. Currently there is an existing hospital in Beaver Bank called the Scotia Nursing Home that has approached the Legion because the hospital can get federal funding if the Legion involved. The Legions do not have funds to provide to the hospital, but they are going to be allotted a certain number of beds for veterans and it will be up the Legion to keep those beds filled. The plan is to expand this hospital into three phases. One section of the hospital will have one or two bedroom apartments for residential accommodation and if one of the residents gets sick they could be moved to another part of the hospital. If the person who is sick becomes gravely ill then there is the third section they can be moved into to make them comfortable in their final days. This complex will enable couples to remain together.

—Access to Assistive Equipment. The Legions are able to supply quite a bit of equipment when it concerns health, seniors and veterans. However, Legions are liable for any equipment that is loaned out so they feel that assistive devices or technical aids are something that should be administered by the province with the support of agencies.

—VIP – Groundskeeping. The VIP program has just been revamped to include spouses, which gives the surviving spouse access to this benefit. In cases where a person does not qualify for the VIP program, the legion will get someone out to their homes to assist them.

—Lack of Area Counsellors. One of the problems that the Legions are having with Veterans Affairs is the lack of counsellors in this province to take care of the veterans and seniors. More money is required to hire more counselors and to reduce the areas they are required to represent.

—VLTs. If the VLTs disappear so will a lot of the Legions. The Legions need the money to continue the funding and support to organizations in the communities.

MOTION/RECOMMENDATIONS

During the meeting the Standing Committee has unanimously passed the following motions:

In regard to assistive devices and technical aids

> " To write to the Minister of Community Services to empower agencies, under this department, with the ability to provide technical health aids and assistive devices to Legions and caregivers for the home care support of veterans, seniors and disabled persons."

In regard to funding for track and field programs

> "To write to the Minister responsible for Health Promotion to inquire about assistance on behalf of the Legion for support in obtaining financial aid for their youth programs and to ensure that this long tradition continues with the partnership of the legions. It is also requested that the Office of Health Promotion examine ways to strongly support the Legions' track and field initiatives and to designate the necessary funds for uniforms and other necessities."

In regard to benefits and services of caregivers

> "The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has agreed to forward a copy of the Legions presentation to the Minister of Health, which outlines specifically the needs and concerns of the Legion with respect to caregivers; i.e. training, Support Groups, Day Dare Options, Respite Care, Access to Equipment, the Need for Housing Options and Palliative Care Options."

In regard to SOCAN

> " The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has unanimously agreed to support the Royal Canadian Legion on this initiative and ask that SOCAN respond favourably to the Legions' request."

DOCUMENTATION

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has requested the following documentation from the Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command:

- Please provide a statistical breakdown or figures showing where the greatest need is in rural Nova Scotia with regard to the needs of caregivers.

References to, and within, this transcript can be found on the Nova Scotia Government Web Site at: http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard//comm/va/va_2005mar03.htm

VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA

April 21, 2005

WITNESSES

Veterans Affairs Canada
Mr. John Walker – Regional Director General
Mr. Gordon Thomas – Client Services Team Manager, Halifax District Office

INTRODUCTION

Veterans Independence Program

There are about 13,000 Nova Scotia veterans enrolled in the Veterans Independence Program; its annual expenditure in 2004 was about $35 million, which equals about $5,600 per veteran.

A recent study done by Veterans Affairs Canada – Atlantic Region shows that when these programs are made available, about 90 per cent of the people, even after they are assessed as needing long-term care, would prefer to stay in their own home. The cost for the taxpayers is about $6,000 on average to provide these individuals with the Veterans Independence Program and the treatment program provides the drugs and related paraphernalia to enable these individuals to say at home.

Currently there are 10,000 beds available and it is a $200 million program, but people do not want it until they absolutely need it.

Area Counsellors

With regard to staffing in Nova Scotia the reason people from Cape Breton are traveling outside the area is because Veterans Affairs had left the choice up to them of whether they would prefer to relocate to the Halifax office or to stay in the Cape Breton office. The area coverage is such that there are many more veterans on the mainland and this is why the area counsellors have to travel as far as they do in order to have equal distribution of work between the two offices.

Respecting staff reductions, in Nova Scotia in 2001-02 Veterans Affairs had 65.9 full-time equivalent (a mix of part-time and full-time). In 2005-06 there are 65.5, which is a reduction of 0.4 over four years. However, these numbers do not show way that work ahs changed in district offices.

In their Client satisfaction surveys 59 per cent of veterans would like to have telephone contact, while 24 per cent would like to have personal contact. Veterans also stated that they are not in favour of voice mail. Not many people like that concept and dealing with veterans whose average age is 80 years, indicates that they like it a little less than the rest of the populace.

Veterans Affairs has established a contact center in their Dartmouth office with a 1-800 number where any veteran can call into and not get voice mail. They make contact with a real person and have their concerns addressed. The contact center is able to deal with 75 per cent of the calls. The other 25 per cent are transferred to the appropriate district office it is across Atlantic Canada.

Across the Canada the establishment of contact centers redirected 1 million phone calls a year from the district offices to the contact centers of which there are three in Canada, one in Nova Scotia, one in Winnipeg and one in Vancouver.

Changes have also been made to their $175 million treatment program. Veterans Affairs has moved it into what they call treatment authorization centers; the one for Atlantic Canada is in Newfoundland. The workload from the district offices in Nova Scotia was further reduced by making Blue Cross in Moncton the service providers for the veterans' travel program. With the operational changes the number of staff available for direct services to veterans is, for the most part, the same.

New Veterans Charter

Previous Veterans Affairs programs were predominantly designed for the elderly veterans of World War II and Canadian Forces (CF) veterans had to have a disability or low income to be able to access these programs. In recognition of the changing needs of CF veterans, a new Veterans' Charter was introduced in April 2005 that established a package of programs and services designed to ensure CF veterans and their families get the best opportunity for a successful transition to productive civilian life upon completion of duty. Key elements of the package are:

- Wellness support – rehabilitation services to enable people to stabilize their medical conditions and have training and education in order to help them reintegrate into the workplace.
- Job placement package – once the person has gone through the rehab process and are ready and retrained for work, Veterans Affairs will have a contract with an outside agency to work with that person to actually find them a job.
- Economic loss program – financial assistance available while undergoing a rehab program.
- Income security program – this will be available to those who find they cannot work.
- Disability award – given to a person, in increments of 10 percent (e.g. $25,000 for 10 per cent disability, 20 per cent, $50,000, etc.) up to a maximum of $250.000 for 100 per cent pension.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Although there were a number of issues discussed throughout the meeting, outlined below are a few of the key issues.

— Area Counsellors. Veterans Affairs have significantly restructured the way they have done work across the country. They are trying to free up area counsellors and the client service agents from 'bureaucracy' so they can deal directly with veterans.

— Reduction in the number of veterans. The numbers are reasonably stable and have been for the past four or five years. A recent announcement with regard to the services and benefits that will be made available for Canadian Forces veterans will actually see their number go up until 2010.

— Merchant Marines. Veterans Affairs provided the Merchant Marines with a significant benefit package within the past four or five years that offered an enhanced level of benefits over what they had before. The difficulty in determining who was entitled to the benefits rested in the record keeping of the Merchant Mariners.

— Disability Award. Injured veterans will receive a one-time lump sum in compensation for the pain and suffering that will remain with them for life because of the injury. There is also an economic loss program, that provides a security net which will make sure they have day-to-day monies available to live on. Individuals with problems in handling finances will be provided with financial counselling. If an individual demonstrates that they are not capable of dealing with their finances, then power of attorney will be provided as an option.

MOTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

During the meeting the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has unanimously passed the following motions:

> "To write to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations to inquire about the possibility of adding a disabled logo to the Veterans License Plate for disabled veterans."

In regard to the Year of the Veteran

> " To request to the Minister responsible for the Year of the Veteran that a program be set up that would allocate funding for special interest groups who would want to honour the Year of the Veteran."

DOCUMENTATION

There was no documentation requested by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs at this time.

References to, and within, this transcript can be found on the Nova Scotia Government Web Site at: http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard//comm/va/va_2005apr21.htm

YEAR OF THE VETERAN

May 10, 2005

WITNESSES

Office of the Year of the Veteran
Mr. Bob Fowler – Deputy Minister designated to support the Minister responsible for the Year of the Veteran
Ms. Norma MacIsaac – Communications Policy Advisor
Ms. Janet Sullivan – Communications Advisor, Communications Nova Scotia

INTRODUCTION

One of the primary purposes that Veterans Affairs Canada has set out for the Year of the Veteran is the need to find a way to engage youth in the ongoing celebrations and make them part of the society that is committed to the memory of veterans and to what veterans have done for our country and for the world.

Instead of an office in Nova Scotia for the Year of the Veteran, the government appointed a minister responsible for the Year of the Veteran to focus activities and indicate that Nova Scotia is proud of its veterans and wants to be part of the celebration with those veterans.

In the decision to create the minister responsible, the Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs was asked to work with the minister responsible and to support him in this position. A communications policy person from Intergovernmental Affairs and a communications advisor from Communications Nova Scotia were given responsibility for the strategic communications planning for various events and for the Web site.

Series of Events

On March 6, 2005 Nova Scotia was the only province to name a Minister responsible for the Year of the Veteran.

A steering committee was put together, consisting of the Premier's Office, the Speaker, the Department of Energy, the Protocol Office, the Department of Transportation and Public works and the staff of Province House; however, the primary responsibility was given to Intergovernmental Affairs.

April 27, 2005 was the official launch of the Year of the Veteran through a resolution in the House by the Premier declaring 2005 as the Year of the Veteran. Statements were made by the Speaker, the Premier, Minister Clarke, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader in the House of the Liberal Party; a reception was held in the Red Chamber for veterans attended by Legion members, MLAs, youth groups, members of the Dutch community and the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. Also launched was the Year of the Veteran Certificate of Recognition. Pages to be inserted in the Book of Remembrance, kept in the foyer of the House, will go out to the schools so young people can learn about the significance of signing it and the meaning behind their signatures. At end of the year, the Province will present that book to the veterans.

Also on April 27, 2005 the Web site was launched, the Book of Remembrance was made available and will continue through to November 11, 2005. There is a series of five posters prepared by Veterans Affairs Canada that will be on display in the lobby of Province House.

On May 1 & 8, 2005, the Battle of the Atlantic ceremony was held. There was a tribute on May 6, 2005 to veterans in Shag Harbour. The Royal Canadian Legion Convention event was held in Sydney Mines on May 22 and 23, 2005. On May 14 & 16 there was a musical tribute "A Time to Remember" held in Truro. On June 5 there is a D-Day ceremony in Bear River, a tribute in Cumberland County, and a tribute to veterans, supper and concert in Shag Harbour. On August 19, a Korea War Veterans Reunion is planned.

Establishment of a Grant Program

In response to a previous motion by the standing committee regarding the establishment of a grant program, the Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs pointed out a number of questions to be considered before getting into such a program:

- How much money should be allocated to it?
- What would the need be?
- What would the criteria be?
- How large should the grant be?

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Although there were a number of issues discussed throughout the meeting, outlined below are a few of the key issues.

— Debert Museum. The military museum in Debert is a private society and was started by a group of citizens. A military camp up until a few years ago, Debert played a most important role as a staging area for army troops prior to their deployment from Halifax. However, the federal government has never recognized or done anything about preserving Debert's military history. A grant to the museum during the Year of the Veteran might be considered appropriate.

— Peacekeeping Day. In 2003, Nova Scotia has proclaimed August 9th as Peacekeeping Day. Peacekeepers now travel all over the world to maintain peace, the Atlantic Command of the Royal Canadian Navy is stationed here in Halifax, and yet there nothing is done to recognize peacekeepers, except the military museum. It was suggested that something should be done on August 9th to recognize peacekeepers.

In response to these matters the representative of the Year of the Veteran said that these suggested matters would be followed up.

MOTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

There were no motions or recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs at this time.

DOCUMENTATION

There was no documentation requested by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs at this time.

References to, and within, this transcript can be found on the Nova Scotia Government Web Site at: http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard//comm/va/va_2005may10.htm

STATEMENT OF SUBMISSION

All of which is respectfully submitted to the House of Assembly
This 17th day of November, 2005

Mr. Gerald Sampson, MLA (Chairman)
(Victoria-The Lakes)

Mr. Cecil O'Donnell, MLA
(Shelburne)

Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA
(Cape Breton Nova)

Mr. Bill Langille, MLA
(Colchester North)

Mr. David A. Wilson, MLA
(Sackville-Cobequid)

Mr. Bill Dooks, MLA
(Eastern Shore)

Mr. Harold Theriault, MLA
(Digby-Annapolis)

Mr. Jerry Pye, MLA
(Dartmouth North)

Mr. Stephen McNeil, MLA
(Annapolis)

Committee Membership

During the 1st Session of the 59th General Assembly of the House of Assembly, the make-up of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs was comprised of the following members:

Mr. Michel Samson, MLA (Chairman)
(Richmond)

Mr. John Chataway, MLA
(Chester-St. Margarets)

Mr. Cecil O'Donnell, MLA
(Shelburne)

Mr. Bill Langille, MLA
(Colchester North)

Mr. Jerry Pye, MLA
(Dartmouth North)

Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA
(Cape Breton Nova)

Mr. David A. Wilson, MLA
(Sackville-Cobequid)

Mr. Harold Theriault, MLA
(Digby-Annapolis)

Mr. Stephen McNeil, MLA
(Annapolis)

On December 31, 2004 the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs sadly acknowledged the passing of one of its members. Mr. John Chataway, MLA (Chester-St.Margarets) passed away due to ill health. Mr. Chataway will be truly missed.

Effective January 1, 2005 Mr. Gerald Sampson, MLA (Cape Breton the Lakes) replaced Mr. Michel Samson, MLA (Richmond) as a member of the committee. As well, Mr. Bill Dooks, MLA (Eastern Shore) replaced Mr. John Chataway, MLA (Chester-St. Margaret's).

Committee Meetings

The Standing Committee has been meeting on Thursdays since its establishment, and all meetings are open to the public. During the 1st Session of the 59th General Assembly the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs met on the following dates.

October 21, 2004
November 25, 2004
January 20, 2005
March 3, 2005
April 21, 2005
May 10, 2005

Transcripts

Transcripts of the committee meetings are available from the Legislative committees Office, 3rd Floor, Dennis Building, 1740 Granville Street, P.O. Box 2630 Station M, Halifax, NS B3J 3N5 or from the Legislature web-site:
http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/COMMITTEES/veteran_affairs.html

Reports

All reports of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs are compiled by the Legislative Committees Office and forwarded to the Committee members for consideration. Once the report is finalized it is then distributed to the following:

> To the Speaker, all member of the Committee, government House Leader and Opposition Leaders, all witnesses who appeared before the Committee, the Legislative Library, Legislative Libraries in all provinces and territories, the media and all provincial caucuses. The report is also available to the general public upon request through the Legislative Committees Office and on the Legislature's website at the following address: http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/COMMITTEES/index.html

Acknowledgements

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs wishes to extend its gratitude to the following:

> The Canadian Youth Remembrance Society, Veterans Affairs Canada – Atlantic Region, Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scoita/Nunavut Command, and Representatives of the Office of the Year of the Veteran. For their time and cooperation, special thanks is extended to Mr. Robert Kinsman, Manager of Hansard; Hansard Staff; to Mr. Jim McInnis, Co-ordinator of Legislative Television; Legislative Television Staff; Mr. Michael Laffin, Co-ordinator, House of Assembly Operations; House of Assembly Staff; and to Ms. Margaret Murphy, Legislative Librarian and Library Staff. The Committee also wishes to thank Ms. Darlene Henry, Committees Office, for her hard work and guidance throughout the year and for the preparation of this annual report.

Appendices

Canadian Youth Remembrance Society

— Correspondence in support of the Canadian Youth Remembrance Society and a certificate of recognition.
— Correspondence to the Federal Minister of Veterans Affairs regarding the Veterans Independence Program cut-off date.

Royal Canadian Legion – NovaScotia/Nunavut Command

— Correspondence regarding assistive devices and technical aids available to seniors, veterans and disabled persons.
— Correspondence regarding financial aid to the Royal Canadian Legions in support of their youth programs.
— Correspondence regarding the needs and concerns of primary caregivers to veterans, seniors and disabled persons.
— Correspondence in support of the Legions' request to SOCANS to regard them under Tariff No. 21 which relates to non-profit organizations.
— Statistical breakdown from the Royal Canadian Legion showing where the greatest need is in rural Nova Scotia with regard to the needs of caregivers.

Veterans Affairs Canada – Atlantic Region

— Correspondence regarding the possible inclusion of a disabled logo being added to the Veterans Licence Plate.
— Correspondence requesting the allocation of funds to special interest groups in support of the Year of the Veteran.

Canadian Youth Remembrance Society

Legislative
Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

To Whom It May Concern:

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs would like to take this opportunity to introduce and recognize the Canadian Youth Remembrance Society.

Under the chairmanship of Mr. Patrick Milner and its dedicated Board of Directors this society will offer Canada's youth and this great nation a "national culture of remembrance in which all Canadians' will understand the contributions and the efforts of those veterans that brought them here today."

The society's mission statement avows to "educate all youth in Canada about the contributions of those who went before them and to increase their engagement in further development of this great nation," the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has no doubt that Mr. Milner and the society's board of directors will work tirelessly to see this mission through.

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs congratulates the Canadian Youth Remembrance Society on becoming an official society. This momentous occasion was officially marked by Her Honour, Lieutenant Governor Myra Freeman on November 5, 2004.

The Chairman and Members of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs wish the Canadian Youth Remembrance Society well in their future endeavours.

Sincerely,

Gerald E. Sampson

Mr. Gerald Sampson, MLA
Chairman
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

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CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

would like to recognize the Canadian Youth Remembrance Society for their dedicated efforts in educating Canada's youth in the culture of remembrance.

Presented on behalf of all Members of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Mr. Gerald Sampson, MLA (Chairman)
Mr. David A. Wilson, MLA (Vice Chairman)
Mr. Cecil O'Donnell, MLA
Mr. Bill Langille, MLA
Mr. Jerry Pye, MLA
Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA
Mr. Harold Theriault, MLA
Mr. Stephen McNeil, MLA

Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

The Honourable Albina Guarnieri
Veterans Affairs Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

December 20, 2004

Dear Madam:

During a recent meeting of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, the issue of the Veterans Independence Program was discussed. Questions arose concerning the cut-off date of September 1990 for the surviving spouse of a veteran to continue to receive this benefit. (See page 22 of the enclosed Hansard)

In previous times, once a veteran passed away, the surviving spouse had one year following the death of their spouse to continue to receive these benefits. On May 15, 2003, the Nova Scotia House of Assembly passed a resolution on the issue of the VIP program. This resolution (see attached) received the unanimous support of the House.

Since then the federal government decided to continue the benefits for the life of the widow if the veteran passed away in or after September 1990.

The question of the Standing Committee today is, what is the justification for the implementation of September 1990 being the cut-off date for this benefit?

As well, through unanimous consent, the Standing Committee passed a motion to:

> " inquire of the federal government to alter this date to better ensure that all widows who should qualify do fall under this program."

The Standing Committee looks forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Mr. Michel Samson, MLA
Chairman
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

MS/dh
Encl. 2

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Minister
of Veterans Affairs

Ministre
des Anciens Combattants

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0P4

FEB - 2 2005

Mr. Michel Samson, M.L.A.
Chairman, Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs
Nova Scotia House of Assembly
3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
P.O. Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Dear Mr. Samson:

Thank you for your correspondence bringing to my attention the concerns and opinions of members of the Committee with respect to the Veterans Independence Program (VIP) and the eligibility of survivors and primary caregivers of Veterans who died prior to September 1, 1990.

We have listened to the advice we received on this matter from across the country. VIP eligibility was one of the very first issues I addressed as Minister. Clearly, this is an issue that affects the Veteran community and is of great concern to Canadians in general. Equally clear is the fact that the Government of Canada recognizes the enormous and selfless contribution of caregivers to the Canadian Veterans who are my Department's responsibility.

.../2

I am sure that you will be pleased to learn that the voices of Canada's Veterans have again been heard. As you may be aware, the Government of Canada has made the decision to eliminate the September 1, 1990, cut-off date and to extend the eligibility for VIP housekeeping and grounds maintenance services to a greater number of qualified primary caregivers, including eligible spouses and common-law partners. This extension reflects the Government's commitment to continue to honour our Veterans by responding directly to the needs of those who care for them.

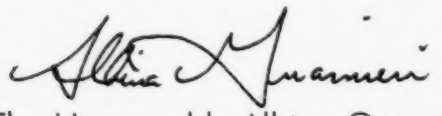
The changes to the VIP program will impact on primary caregivers in two significant ways. First, they will provide lifetime continuation to qualified primary caregivers of Veterans who benefited from VIP housekeeping and/or grounds maintenance services since the program's inception in 1981, and who were receiving these services at the time of their death or admission to a long-term care facility. Second, they will ensure that primary caregivers are not cut off from the VIP housekeeping and/or grounds maintenance services that the Veteran was receiving at the time of his/her admittance to a long-term care facility.

Knowing that the Veterans Independence Program has been instrumental in allowing Veterans to remain independent in their homes is certainly a point of pride for my Department. As Minister, I feel privileged to have been able to recognize the commitment and selfless support shown by primary caregivers by extending the same services to those who supported our Veterans and who themselves came to rely on the housekeeping and/or grounds maintenance services while taking care of them.

.../3

On a final note, thank you again for taking the time to express your views on this important issue.

Yours sincerely,



The Honourable Albina Guarnieri, P.C., M.P.

Royal Canadian Legion – NovaScotia/Nunavut Command

Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

March 16, 2005

Honourable David Morse
Minister of Department of Community Services
8th Floor, Nelson Place
5675 Spring Garden Road
PO Box 696
Halifax, NS

Dear Minister: David

On Thursday, March 3, 2005 the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has met with members of the Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command.

One of the issues brought forth by the Legion were needs of caregivers of veterans, seniors and disabled persons with respect to access to technical health aids and assistive devices.

It was stated within the Legions presentation that many older persons need specialized equipment in order to be cared for at home. While some required items may be available on loan, the number of programs lending equipment is decreasing due to liability issues.

It was also said that assistive devices or technical aids should be administered by the province with the support of agencies.

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has unanimously agreed to write to the Minister of Community Services to empower agencies, under this department, with the ability to provide technical health aids and assistive devices to Legions and caregivers for the home care support of veterans, seniors and disabled persons.

Enclosed is a copy of the presentation that was received from the Royal Canadian Legion, and a copy of the Hansard Transcript.

Sincerely,

Gerald E. Sampson

Mr. Gerald E. Sampson, MLA
Chairman
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Encl. 2

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

March 16, 2005

Honourable Rodney MacDonald
Minister of Health Promotions
World Trade and Convention Centre
1800 Argyle Street, 6th Floor
P.O. Box 456
Halifax, NS

Dear Minister: Rodney

The Standing Committee on Veteran's Affairs has recently met with members of the Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command regarding the lack of funding for their youth programs.

The Dominion Command and its various Legions sponsor the youth track & field program. However, with declining memberships to Legions, rising costs of maintenance and other expenses, they are finding it very difficult to continue to fund their youth programs. Lack of funding support will result in cutbacks or cancellation of some or all of these programs.

As stated in their presentation to the Standing Committee, the RCL is hoping to send 38 athletes, four chaperones and three coaches to the National Track and Field Championships being held in Alberta this year. The cost of this event is estimated at $63,500.00. Not only is this a huge cost for the Legions to bear, but the athletes and attendants themselves must pay for their own uniforms and necessities as the Legions cannot provide the funding for these as well. The estimated cost of uniforms and other necessities is $11, 250.00. In past years, the Legion has requested assistance from businesses and the provincial government to offset these costs, with no favourable response.

The Veterans Affairs Committee has unanimously agreed to write to the Minister responsible for Health Promotions to inquire about assistance on behalf of the Legion for support in obtaining financial aid for their youth programs and to ensure that this long tradition continues with the partnership of the Legions. It was also stated that the Office of Health Promotion examine ways to strongly support the Legions track and field initiative, and to designate the necessary funds for uniforms and other necessities.

. . . /2

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Enclosed is a copy of the presentation from the Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command, and a copy of the Hansard transcript.

Sincerely,

Gerald E. Sampson

Mr. Gerald E. Sampson, MLA
Chairman
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Encl. 2

Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

March 16, 2005

Honourable Angus MacIsaac
Minister of Department of Health
4th Floor, Joseph Howe Bldg.,
1690 Hollis Street
PO Box 488
Halifax, NS

Dear Minister: Angus

On Thursday, March 3, 2005, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs had met with members of the Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command to discuss various issues and concerns.

One of these concerns centred on the benefits and services of caregivers. As stated within the Legions presentation the majority of older persons in Canada requiring care are supported by their families. Although they offer these services out of love they, in fact, save the government countless dollars through their commitment. These caregivers need the support and benefits of training, support groups, day care options, respite care, access to equipment, and so on.

Following this presentation, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has agreed to forward a copy of the Legions presentation to you, as Minister of Health, which outlines specifically the needs and concerns of the Legion with respect to caregivers.

Sincerely,

Gerald E. Sampson

Mr. Gerald E. Sampson, MLA
Chairman
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Encl. 2

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Nova Scotia
Department of Health
Office of the Minister

PO Box 488
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3J 2R8

Bus: 902 424-3377
Fax: 902 424-0559

Our File Number:

April 7, 2005

Mr. Gerald E. Sampson, MLA
Chairman
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs
3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street, Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, NS B3J 3N5

Dear Mr. Sampson:

Thank you for your letter of March 16, 2005, which provided me with a copy of the Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command's Report to our provincial government's Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. We share the sentiment expressed in the Command's Report. We recognize how critically important it is that family members care for one another in our society. If it were not for the contributions that family members make to the caring of their older members, the formal health system would likely be unsustainable.

All levels of government, charitable organizations, and society at large have a role in supporting caregivers who are the backbone of our healthy and caring society. For its part, the Department of Health has recently enhanced its respite services available to caregivers by improving access to facility-based respite services. These designated respite beds are now available for the sole purpose of caregiver respite. They are fairly and equitably accessed through a province-wide admission process, and increased public subsidy has made these beds more affordable. More information on this policy can be found at **www.gov.ns.ca/health/ccs**.

As you may be aware, the Continuing Care Branch of the Department of Health, has begun its Strategic Framework Project for Continuing Care Services in Nova Scotia. The primary focus of this Project is to consider how to help Nova Scotians requiring Continuing Care Services remain in their own homes and communities. Through public consultations, as well as district and provincial committee work, we will explore new and effective ways of supporting Nova Scotians with Continuing Care needs. We will consider current and future trends as we make critical decisions on how limited health care funds will be spent.

Facility-based respite, as well as, home-based respite services offered by the Department of Health are critical pieces of caregiver supports. The Department is interested in exploring how these services can be improved and augmented with other supports.

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The province-wide public consultation sessions are expected to commence in late May or early June. The detailed schedule will be posted on our public website at **www.gov.ns.ca/health/ccs** and we plan to advertise in newspapers and other media. We hope that the Royal Canadian Legion will take advantage of this opportunity and help shape the future of Continuing Care Services in this province. I believe that the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command would make a valuable contribution to this important public dialogue.

Thank you for sharing the Legion's Report. I will also ensure that the staff of the Department working on the Strategic Framework Project receive a copy.

Yours truly,

Angus MacIsaac

c. Keith Menzies
Executive Director
Continuing Care Branch

Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

March 16, 2005

Mr. Laurence Godfrey
SOCAN Dartmouth
45 Alderney Drive
Suite 802, Queen Square
Dartmouth, NS
B2Y 2N6

Dear Mr. Godfrey:

Recently the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs had met with members of the Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command.

During the meeting the Legion has outlined difficulties between the Legions and SOCAN. It seems that some Legion branches were paying SOCAN fees and others were not, and that SOCAN requested that Dominion Command instruct all their branches to make their payments. At that time it was brought to the attention of SOCAN that the Royal Canadian Legion is a non profit organization and requested that SOCAN recognize this.

The Legion recently contacted SOCAN to again request that SOCAN recognize the Royal Canadian Legion as a non profit organization which provides numerous services to their communities. The Legion states that you have been very receptive to them and their issue and that the legion may be eligible for licensing under tariff #21. It has been said that you are working with Dominion Command on making this issue a reality in the near future.

The Royal Canadian legion had requested the assistance of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs in encouraging SOCAN to recognize the Royal Canadian Legion as a non profit organization and permit their branches to be licensed under the SOCAN tariff #21.

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has unanimously agreed to support the Royal Canadian Legion on this initiative and ask that you respond favourably to the Legions request.

Sincerely,

Gerald E. Sampson

Mr. Gerald E. Sampson, MLA
Chairman
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Encl. 1

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Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630 Station M
Halifax Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

March 9, 2005

Mr. Vic Barnes
Command President
Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/
Nunavut Command
P.O. Box 9075, Station A
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 5M7

Dear Mr. Barnes:

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs would like to again thank you, Mr. Hatcher and Mr. Fudge for meeting with them on March 3, 2005. During the meeting emphasis was placed on the issues of rural Nova Scotia with regard to the needs of caregivers.

Following that discussion it was requested that the Royal Canadian Legion provide a statistical breakdown or figures showing where the greatest need is in rural Nova Scotia

Enclosed are copies of the Hansard transcript from that meeting. Should you require further copies, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Darlene Henry
Committee Clerk

Encl. 4

Darlene Henry, Committee Clerk
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs
3rd Floor Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630 Station M
Halifax Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Dear Ms. Henry,

Thank you for your inquiry of March 9 in which you sought further information about the need for the programs that we suggested required support from the provincial government. With regard to the numbers of caregivers in this province, you will find that these figures are not readily available, however extrapolating from Canada-wide data we can estimate that there are approximately people in the province of Nova Scotia serving as fulltime caregivers to members of their family. We do know from data collected in this province that the most frequent caregivers are the spouse of the person requiring care followed by daughters and daughters-in-law. For further information on caregivers in Nova Scotia we suggest that you contact the Nova Scotia Caregiver Association and the Center on Aging at Mount Saint Vincent. The Department of Continuing Care also has anecdotal data on the needs of caregivers in this province.

With regard to Adult Day Programs which we indicated in our report are a very valuable service to family caregivers I am appending a list of the programs currently offered in Nova Scotia. You will note that large portions of Nova Scotia are not served by this form of care and I reiterate that the funding for Adult Day Care in this province is very limited.

In respect to housing for seniors, there has been significant growth in this area, in fact there are over 7700 subsidized seniors apartments in Nova Scotia. In spite of this the rural areas of the province are still underserved. I have attached "Some Facts on Seniors and Housing in Atlantic Canada". This is from a report entitled "More Than Shelter, Housing Policy Kit for Seniors in Atlantic Canada" produced in 2004 by The Atlantic Seniors Health Promotion Network.

Finally. I spoke of the need for improved palliative care in certain parts of the province. I mentioned when we met last that District 3 has very limited palliative care, in fact there are no palliative care beds in Valley Regional Hospital. If you are wondering about the greatest area of need for palliative care in this province it is likely District 3. This is the same area where a community initiative has developed to establish a freestanding hospice.

I refer you back to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs Annual Report of 2004. In that report you will see that the proposed hospice will cost approximately 1.6 million dollars, it will serve have 10 beds and will deliver high quality palliative care for less than 400.00 per patient per day (approximately 1/3-1/2 the cost of care in a hospital setting). This initiative is entirely driven by the community and although the planning committee has met frequently with the Department of Health over a 5 year period there has been no firm commitment to provide the funding required to operate this facility once it is built. The Royal Canadian Legion sees this as a wonderful opportunity to provide an alternative, cost-effective means of palliative care. Local branches of the Legion are supporting this initiative and we encourage the Province of Nova Scotia to do the same. Support of this pilot project will result in a valuable service to dying persons and their families and will provide Nova Scotia with a model for a unique means of service delivery.

I trust that this addresses some of your questions. You will find when you read the reports referred to in this letter that much of what I raised in my report is heartily supported by other organizations working with and for the aging population in Nova Scotia.

Yours sincerely,

Victor Barnes

INFORMATION RELATED TO THE VON-KINGS HOSPICE PROJECT

1. This project has been developing over twelve years. It began with discussions involving VON caregivers and members of the Acadia University Department of Sociology

2. Several major reports have been prepared, including a needs assessment, a feasibility study, a comprehensive business plan and appropriate palliative care statistics

3. The initial and continuing goal of the project is to build, equip and furnish a ten-bed free-standing hospice (preferably but not necessarily on lands of the VRH in Kentville)

4. The Foundation will provide all the costs connected with construction and hand over the building as a turn-key facility; the aim is that the operating costs be met from public funds

5. If public funds are provided for operational purposes it is assumed that the Minister of Health will determine how the facility is governed; if no public funds are forthcoming, the Foundation will establish an independent, representative, accountable Board

6. The Foundation has spent a considerable sum on such matters as a site survey, an architect's sketch and a professional assessment of fund raising potential in the Valley; we have also hired the necessary support staff

7. Although to date there has been no concerted attempt to raise money, sums available in Foundation's various accounts amounted on 1 February 2005 to approximately $280,000. There are two employees, one a full-time Co-ordinator of Development, the other working as Secretary to the Board for approximately 20 hours per month

8. A fundraising campaign is in its early "quiet" stage. Presentations will be made to various groups and individuals; a highly visible event is planned for 10 June

THE PRESENT SITUATION

If public funds are forthcoming, work could begin on the VRH site in the spring.

If there is no support from the federal or provincial government the Foundation will purchase or construct an appropriate facility.

The Foundation will continue its efforts to secure operational funding for the hospice from public funds.

18 February 2005

Adult Day Programs in Nova Scotia

Resources & Sup
other web sites, li
that can assist yo
more information.

- Respite Care
- Legal Support
- Associations
- Resource Mate
- Health Equipm
- Research
- Support Group
- Where to Begir
Introductory Plar
for Family Carec

Amherst
VON Adult Day Program
Randi Peterson
Phone 667-8796
Fax 667-8303

Annapolis County
VON Annapolis County Adult Day Program
Carol Ward
Phone 902-665-4804 or 1-888-939-1919
Fax 902-665-7562
Email wardc@vonannvalley.ns.ca

Berwick
VON Annapolis Valley Branch
Barb Rand, RN and Brenda Harland, RN
Phone 538-7844

Halifax
Northwood Homecare Adult Day Programs
2615 Northwood Terrace
- Social Day Program
- Day Support Program for individuals with Alzheimer disease or other forms of dementia
Phone 454-8311

Musquodoboit Harbour
The Birches
Eileen MacNeil
Phone 889-3474
Fax 889-2271

Newport Station
Day Break Senior Day Care
Suzanne Rouleau
Phone 798-5974
Email sue.rouleau@ns.sympatico.ca

Oakwood Terrace
Amber Mather
Phone 469-3702
Fax 469-3824

Parraboro
South Cumberland Health Centre
Debbie Fullerton
Phone 254-2540
Fax 254-2504

Pictou
Take A Break Program
Marg Facey
Phone 485-4341

Fax 485-9203

Sydney
Seniors Golden Day Program
Kevin Head
Phone 567-1787
Fax 567-9650

Sydney Mines
Harbour View Hospital Day program
Kathy Jessome / Ruth Grant
Phone 736-2831
Fax 544-0261

Truro
VON Adult Day Program
Gloria Murphy Baker
Phone: 895-9379

Windsor
Day Break Senior Day Care
Suzanne Holmes
Phone 798-5974
Fax 798-0021

Some Facts on Seniors and Housing in Atlantic Canada

Atlantic Canada has one of the most rapidly aging populations in the world (Shifting Sands: The Changing Shape of Atlantic Canada, prepared for Health Canada by Susan Lilley and Joan Campbell, 1999). Atlantic Canada, particularly Nova Scotia, has the oldest housing stock in Canada and the most likely to be in need of repair. These two factors, an aging population and 'old' housing, suggest it is important to look at housing policies and programs for older persons in our region. Following are some interesting statistics concerning older persons and housing which could be used in promoting and discussing housing policies and programs for seniors.

- By 2036, 25% of the Canadian population will be over 65 and in Atlantic Canada the percentage is even greater – 30% will be over 65.
- In 2003 there were 101,300 persons over 65 in New Brunswick, 65.300 over 65 in Newfoundland and Labrador; 19,100 over 65 in Prince Edward Island and 130,300 over 65 in Nova Scotia. For a total of 316,000 persons over 65 in the Atlantic Provinces (www.statcan.ca). Figures for both sexes in thousands.
- 93% of older persons live in privately owned or rented dwellings and 7% live in institutions.
- In 2003, 35% of women 65 -74 lived alone and this proportion jumps to 42.8% for those 75-84 (Time Alone, August 2002).
- The number of senior-led households more than doubled between 1976 and 2001 (Canadian Housing Observer, 2003: p. 18).
- The number of senior-led households with affordability problems increased by 16.3% between 1997 and 2000 (Canadian Housing Observer, 2003: p. 45).
- More seniors in Atlantic Canada receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) than in any other of the Canadian Provinces (66% in Newfoundland and Labrador, 50% in Prince Edward Island, 45% in Nova Scotia, and 51% in New Brunswick. Receiving the GIS is often used as an indication of low income or living at or below the poverty line.
- In 1997, 49.1% of unattached older women lived in poverty compared to 33.3% of elderly males (Canadian Fact Book on Poverty, 2000: p. 2).
- It is estimated that 49% of single older women live on or below the poverty line (Canadian Fact Book on Poverty, Canadian Council on Social Development).
- Older persons who rent are the most likely to have problems finding affordable housing, particularly single older women. The average rental in 2000 was $778 in St. John's, $823 in Halifax, $552 in Saint John and $709 in Charlottetown (Community Profiles, Statistics Canada, 2001).

Veterans Affairs Canada – Atlantic Region

Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

April 29, 2005

Hon. Barry Barnet
Minister
Service Nova Scotia and
Municipal Relations
Maritime Centre
14th Floor, North
1505 Barrington Street
P.O. Box 216
Halifax, NS
B3J 3M4

Dear Mr. ~~Minister~~ Barry:

During the April 21, 2005 meeting of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs concern arose regarding the possibility of a combined veteran and disabled licence plate. It was debated during the meeting that a person could not have two plates on their car and that they could have a regular plate or a veteran plate with a separate disabled sticker to place in the window or the front of their vehicle.

The Standing committee would like to know if it is possible that a veteran plate could have a disabled logo added to it, and how this particular situation could be addressed.

Please provide the Standing Committee with clarification on this matter at your earliest convenience.

Enclosed is a copy of the transcript from the meeting.

Sincerely,

Gerald E. Sampson

Mr. Gerald E. Sampson, MLA
Chairman
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Encl. (1)

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Nova Scotia

Service Nova Scotia
and Municipal Relations
Office of the Minister

PO Box 216
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Canada B3J 2M4

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Our File Number:

MAY 19 2005

Mr. Gerald E Sampson, MLA
Legislative Committees Office
3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

Dear Mr. Sampson:

Thank you for your letter of May 2, 2005 regarding discussion which arose at the Standing Committee on Veteran's Affairs over the possibility of combining the disabled and veteran's plate.

I note that as part of the April 21, 2005 meeting of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, the discussion indicated that a person with a disability could use a placard displayed from their rearview mirror instead of a license plate. This is indeed correct and I believe the means in which most veterans are dealing with the circumstance. Our license plates are only a minimum size and I am concerned that any attempt to combine the plates would diminish the intent of paying respect to those who have served in our Armed Forces.

The notion of applying a disabled sticker to a veteran's licence plate has also been proposed. The disabled licence plate and placard are both recognized throughout North America. If we were to introduce this sticker unilaterally, then our drivers may be subject to enforcement action. While it may be possible to have this sticker adopted, it would indeed not be a task accomplished in the short term.

I am hopeful that the option of the veteran's plate and placard will be acceptable for those involved.

I trust that this adequately responds to your letter.

Yours truly,

Barry Barnet

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Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N5

April 29, 2005

Honourable Cecil Clarke
Minister
Responsible for the Year of the Veteran
Bank of Montreal Bldg., Suite 400
5151 George Street
P.O. Box 2664
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3P7

Dear Mr. ~~Minister~~ Cecil:

On April 21, 2005, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs had discussed forwarding the following request to your office in honour of the Year of the Veteran.

Since the year 2005 is the Year of the Veteran, communities across Nova Scotia may be encouraged to get together to celebrate and honour local veterans. However, obtaining funding to support these initiatives may be difficult for some groups and organizations to arrange.

Therefore, the Standing Committee has passed the following motion:

> " To request to the Minister responsible for the Year of the Veteran that a program be set up that would allocate funding for special interest groups who would want to honour the Year of the Veteran."

Enclosed are several copies of the transcript from the meeting for your perusal.

The Standing Committee looks forward to your hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Gerald E. Sampson

Mr. Gerald E. Sampson, MLA
Chairman
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Encl (2)

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